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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002028

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PNAT](#) [SMIG](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: NEW MINISTER OF DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION BRINGS
POSITIVE NEW OUTLOOK TO MODM

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Classified By: POLCOUNS MARGARET M. SCOBEEY
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: PolCouns, RefCoord and IRMO/MODM consultants had a positive initial meeting with the new Minister of Displacement and Migration Abd-al-Samad Rahman Sultan on May 31. Sultan was well informed about all the populations of concern to the Ministry, and expressed a desire for a continuing dialogue with the USG and the international community on issues of mutual interest. End summary.

¶2. (C) In a May 31 meeting with incoming PolCouns, RefCoord, Poloffs and IRMO/MODM Consultants, newly appointed Minister of Displacement and Migration Abd-al-Samad Rahman Sultan expressed his desire to work together with the USG to bring the ministry up to an international standard. Sultan was open to PolCouns' suggestion that Iraq consider signing the refugee convention, but noted that the MFA would have a primary role in matters involving international agreements. When asked whether he had met with UNHCR-Iraq, he said not yet, and indicated willingness to work with the UN and the international community on matters of mutual interest. PolCouns encouraged Sultan to reach out to international organizations and the donor community. RefCoord will return separately to discuss policy issues in greater detail.

¶3. (SBU) The first issue the Minister raised was his desire to assist Iraqis in bad situations abroad, specifically jailed Iraqi asylum seekers in Denmark and Russia. He asked for the support of the US on issues relating to the many foreign refugee populations in Iraq. The new Minister also said that Iraqi refugees in Iran were among his first priorities, as they are not integrated into Iranian society and UNHCR is "very weak" in Iran. He wants to encourage them to return to their home country, and to provide them with assistance to do that. PolCouns offered USG help in looking at solutions in the short or long term.

¶4. (SBU) When PolCouns asked Sultan to make special efforts to coordinate with the Ministry of the Interior to increase protection of the Palestinians since they are a community of special vulnerability, the Minister said MODM was willing to coordinate but had limited resources. He asked specifically for financial assistance to pay rent for the Palestinians, saying that UNHCR is discontinuing these payments. PolCouns promised RefCoord would follow up on the rent issue with UNHCR. (note: we understand UNHCR has provided funds to cover rent for the Palestinians through December, 2006.)

¶5. (SBU) The new minister was well informed on internal displacements due to recent sectarian violence, noting current estimates of about 17,000 displaced families, with more than 3,000 displaced families in Baghdad alone. The Minister stated that through coordination with other Ministries, MODM can ensure that needy displaced persons get support. He also mentioned the 11 MODM field offices which are working on tracking displacement.

¶6. (C) Sultan acknowledged weaknesses in some sections of the Ministry and the need for further capacity building, particularly in the planning department which is responsible for both internal planning and development of proposals to present to the international community. He expressed an interest in assistance from the USG on training and workshops to address those weaknesses.

¶7. (SBU) IRMO/MODM explained that the IRMO Consultants' purpose is to provide technical advice and assistance to help the Ministry develop capacity to fulfill its mandate. IRMO mentioned that it could help the Ministry in many areas, including organization of the Ministry, interaction with the

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international community, refining methodology of MODM statistics to increase the credibility of MODM reports, etc. IRMO/MODM will return separately to discuss technical capacity building support in greater detail.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: The new Minister is articulate, personal, and speaks very good English. Although he has been at the ministry only two weeks and has no previous background in refugee issues other than his personal experiences as a refugee in Iran, he was well informed about his Ministry's mandate and needs. He included two of his Director-Generals in the meeting, and based on his comments had consulted in advance with them on substantive matters -- a welcome change from the previous Minister's approach. This new Minister will present well to donors, and we are hopeful that he will follow through on the statements made in this initial meeting. We are looking forward to working with him and will be taking him up on his offer to meet regularly with both RefCoord and IRMO. end comment

¶9. (C) BIONOTE: Attended Basrah Medical College and completed his medical studies in Tehran. He operated a medical clinic in Qom for a number of years and is said to have treated members of both the current and former Iraqi Prime Ministers' families.

KHALILZAD